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and to legitimize the new unified empire and its pretense to being a naturally occurring stage in the unfolding of cosmic order and power. It must be noted that in conjunction with the publication of this book, the author has also written what might be considered something of a case study of how notions of spatial configuration achieve all of this and more (see *The Flood Myths of Early China* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006]).

I can find only a single criticism that is worthy of note in a brief review: the complete lack of illustrations in a book that is so obviously about a visual topic. The only image to be found anywhere in the book is on the cover, a rubbing of a Han portrayal of events within a walled compound. It shows nothing of the symmetry or symbolism that is so readily available in many other examples of Han art, such as TLV mirrors, which richly illustrate Lewis's analysis of the microcosm–macrocosm continuum and the importance of order formed around a center.

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A Tale of Two Melons: Emperor and Subject in Ming China. By SARAH SCHNEEWIND. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 2006. 176 pp. \$32.95 (cloth); \$8.95 (paper).

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When Jonathan Spence first published *The Death of Woman Wang* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), did he imagine it would still be on many undergraduate reading lists nearly thirty years later? *A Tale of Two Melons* is a very different book, but it, too, should still appear on syllabi thirty years from now. At the heart of this elegant study lies a single story: On July 28, 1372, the emperor, Ming Taizu, was interrupted by a group of high officials who presented him with a pair of ripe melons. Unusually, the melons had grown on a single stem and were joined at the stalk. In the insightful analysis of their story, Schneewind uncovers the meanings assigned to this pair of melons by those who were in attendance when the fruits were presented to the emperor and by those who wrote about them afterward. Her close reading of the many texts that together form this historical “collage picture” (p. xi) brings to life aspects of Ming Chinese civilization, such as the intricate relationships at play within the imperial court or the roles of women and concubines, while at the same time shedding light on major historiographical questions, such as the intertwining of locality and center in Ming China or the nature of the relationship between the pictures created by historians and the elusive events themselves.

There is no doubt that this is a useful book for undergraduate teaching. It is written in an easygoing, lively style in which the emperor is described as “not understand[ing] what was up” (p. 1) or as “the johnny-jump-up grandson of

an impoverished Jurong gold panner” (p. 91). It weaves clear explanations of complexities such as auspicious omens or the civil service or the mandate of heaven into the narrative without interrupting or distracting the reader, making it accessible to any undergraduate. While restricting references to the historiography to a bare minimum, it provides clear elaborations in the footnotes and a useful bibliography that highlights further readings and primary sources in translation.

Schneewind situates her readings of the tale in a variety of contexts that shed light on specific aspects of society. In the chapter titled “The Smile of the God,” for example, she untangles the story of “the Zhang god” (p. 61). In 1356, in the midst of his military campaigns, Zhu Yuanzhang received an encouraging sign from a deity known as Cishan. In gratitude, Zhu had a new temple for Cishan built outside the imperial capital in Nanjing. As Schneewind goes on to explain, many different stories circulated about the identity of Cishan, also known as King Zhang, and indeed, “the connections are not easy to piece together” (p. 67). It is entirely to Schneewind’s credit that she does not attempt to gloss over the contradictions that are manifest in the sources. It is possible, however, that this brief glimpse of these coexisting yet contradictory King Zhang/Cishan stories may leave the undergraduate reader confused. Recent studies of popular cults argue that the continued existence of competing origin tales of demons and deities suggests an ongoing “civilizing” process by which different actors vie for control over the deity’s powers (see, e.g., Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004]). That process perhaps explains the motives of Zhu Yuanzhang, the local actors, and the compilers of later gazetteers better than the discussion of whether the King Zhang worshipped in Zhu’s ancestral village was or was not the same as Zhang Bo of the Han dynasty.

The extensive research on which this book is based not only shows the way in research-led teaching but also makes this an exciting read for specialists in the field. Schneewind takes the reader on a voyage of discovery that starts with Zhu Yuanzhang’s own “In Praise of Auspicious Melons” (translated in full in one of the appendices) and ends with a visit to Jurong County to see what remains of the ancestral shrines and burial mounds of the Zhang family, whose lands had produced the pair of melons. Schneewind draws on the expertise of the historians in county archives and museums in China who seek to preserve what remains of the heritage entrusted to them, constantly providing new materials that we cannot ignore as we produce our “collages.” In doing so, Schneewind further strengthens her view of Ming history, set out in previous articles, in her *Community Schools and the State in Ming China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), and in her edited volume on Taizu (*Long Live the Emperor! Uses of the Ming Founder across Six Centuries of East Asian History* [Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, forthcoming]): Power in Ming China may well have been located at the imperial court, but it was constantly being

contested and redefined by the people, products, and texts that traveled between center and locality. This deceptively small book on melons helps us think about large questions in a most enjoyable manner.

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Rewriting Early Chinese Texts. By EDWARD L. SHAUGHNESSY. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006. 288 pp. \$85.00 (cloth); \$29.95 (paper).

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In his introduction to *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts*, Edward L. Shaughnessy, Creel Professor of Early Chinese Studies at the University of Chicago, recounts a close friend's dissatisfaction with an earlier draft of this offering: "These are all very nice, but why don't you write a real book?" (p. 7). Post-modern theories, not to mention excavated finds, have complicated our ideas of the book, but this reviewer believes that Shaughnessy has put together parts of four books in his *Rewriting*.

The first is a loose memoir about Shaughnessy's long history of exchanges with three Chinese mentors—Li Xueqin 李学勤, Qiu Xigui 裘锡圭, and Ma Chengyuan 马承源 (d. 2004)—that positions Shaughnessy as the principal heir to these influential figures. The second provides factual reports of major archaeological finds, especially those of Guodian and Shanghai, on the assumption that finds dated to ca. 300 BCE prove that just around the time of Confucius (551–479 BCE) and Laozi (identified as "an elder contemporary of Kongzi" on p. 258), the "core texts" of a unitary and stable Chinese tradition took shape. (That makes the ascription on p. 11 of certain "Confucian teachings" to "the time of Confucius himself" off by two centuries or so.) The third could serve as an excellent primer for textual critics in training, if it did not—unlike Bart Ehrman's spectacular *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005)—discount the possibility that some variants in transcription might be linked to oral transmissions.

Much of the book relating to the first three projects is interesting and informative, though Shaughnessy's hypothesis—that "texts are written and rewritten over time" (p. 254)—is unlikely to occasion surprise in a field that has been debating the connections between oral, written, and pictorial rhetoric for decades. It becomes harder to follow Shaughnessy, however, when he proceeds to the fourth project, arguing that (1) a single "full text" or "definitive book" exists for many authoritative works in the canon, (2) to which changes were introduced mainly while copying "from one written version to another" because (3) "early China offers little hard evidence" of the role of orality in transmission (pp. 58–59, 92, 260, respectively). When positing a fixed "Confucian canon" dating to the pre-Qin period and "authenticated" by recent manuscript finds along